1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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115 There were both "wild" and "village" Veddas even in the days of his youth, and the only difficulty experienced with the old man was in keeping the two classes perfectly distinct in his mind. The following facts were elicited in the course of three interviews, each lasting somewhat less than an hour. He stated that he was just able to walk when he came to the Eastern Province, and that as he grew up he spent much of his time with the Veddas hunting and collecting honey. The [156] Veddas of those days were a merry people, and with a most eloquent gesture the old man showed how they would throw dry leaves into the air and shout and dance for happiness; he said also that they were absolutely truthful. Every Vedda carried a bow and arrows and an axe; more arrows than one were 411 carried, but it was not clear that they only carried two; it seemed that *tudadi*, a word that the old man said was used to describe the number of arrows carried, may have meant a small quantity or may have been a hunting term corresponding to "brace" or "leash." The old man had seen Veddas shoot lying on their backs and holding the bow with their feet, but this was only for amusement and to show their skill, no serious shooting was done in this way. The feathers of peacocks, herons and hawks were especially used in feathering arrows; any of these birds would be shot with an ordinary arrow, and peacock was [262] eaten as was jungle fowl, though no one would eat porcupine or buffalo; for these abstinences he could give no reason. Traps were not used. Fish were eaten, being caught by poisoning the 226 water of pools with the bark of *damba*, *nahapata*, *pusilpata* 278 (? *Entada scandens*) and the fruit of *timbiri* (*Diospyros embryopteris*) and *kukuruman* (*Adenanthera bicolor*). Pots and bark 415 cloth bags were made and betel pouches of monkey skin, though even then some village Veddas had cloth betel bags, and these occasionally reached the wilder Veddas. Among the village 304 Veddas both sexes bored their ears and the women wore ivory 301 studs in them; whether the women of the wilder groups bored 184 their ears and wore these ornaments was not clear, certainly 372 the men did not. Fire was obtained from two pieces of wood by drilling.

342 The wilder Veddas of those days built no houses but lived
437

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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Uru *warugu* should carry game and honey for the men of Morane and Unapane.

Some of the village Veddas of those days had cloth, and when dancing to the *yaku* they wore the long cloth garment called *kangalla*; the wilder Veddas had no cloth and wore leaves, but it was not clear whether they had not also a certain amount of bark cloth which was their ordinary covering, and leaves may have been worn in addition when they invoked the *yaku*[1].

The old man knew of the custom of a man keeping a piece of human liver in his betel pouch; it was universal and in his young days every Vedda desired to have a piece. Strangers, even Veddas, who intruded on the hunting grounds would be killed and their liver taken, no other part of the dead man being used, and the custom gave rise neither to warfare nor to vendettas[2].

Caves in which a death occurred were deserted, the corpse being covered with leaves; perhaps men very near dissolution were left before death had actually occurred, but this did not seem certain. Bones found in the cave when the group returned to it after an interval of some ten or twelve years were thrown away quite carelessly. The spirits of the dead became the Nae Yaku who, with Kande Yaka and Bilindi Yaka, gave game and prosperity. The *kirikoraha* ceremony was performed for the Nae Yaku, and *adukku* (cooked food), which even in the old days consisted of coconut and rice, was offered to them. The wilder Veddas gave nothing to the Buddhist priests and made no offerings at shrines, nor did they know the Kataragam God, Kanda Swami, though the village Veddas worshipped him and knew that Walliame had been taken to wife by him, and honey was presented to the goddess at certain shrines, especially one at Kokote Sila, frequented by the village Veddas.

A few of the village Veddas would dance for the Sinhalese in order to protect their cattle, bring prosperity to their villages, and secure them from epidemics; they would dance *kolamaduwa* which the old man pointed out was derived from a

[1] Cf. p. 213.
[2] For details of this custom see Chapter VIII.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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points were left doubtful. The extent of their neighbours' influence upon this community may be gauged to a certain degree by the following fact. When visiting the shaman we asked him to show us his *aude* and other sacred objects (as will be seen later, certain beads are held sacred in this community), he replied that he did not keep them at his own hut because of the noxious influence due to the presence of the women[1], but that the Sinhalese *gamarale*[2] took charge of them for him. We then went together to the house of the *gamarale*; this consisted of a hut divided by a partition at the back, one room being the sleeping room and the other the granary, and a large open barn in front, with its roof continuous with that of the hut. In the part of the barn nearest the rooms, the women of the household were cooking and pounding rice, while the back was railed off to form a byre in which a number of calves were tethered and into which the cows were driven at night. When it was pointed out that there were also women living in this house the shaman explained that their influence was counter-balanced by the presence of the cows. Physically some of the Unuwatura Bubula Veddas must be regarded as tolerably pure-blooded, since they included some of the shortest men we met. One man measured only about 1360 millimetres (53½ inches), but probably he is to be regarded as almost a dwarf.

VILLAGE VEDDAS.

The village Veddas form a class which it is most difficult to describe briefly, yet fairly. The term must not be taken to apply to degenerate Veddas who have lost their jungle characteristics and independent habits under Sinhalese encroachment. Doubtless many such folk do live as Sinhalese in chena settlements for a short time before their extinction in the surrounding mass of peasant Sinhalese. But this is not the sense in which the Sinhalese apply the term Gan Veddo (village Veddas), nor is it the sense in which we use the term. Knox speaks of "wild"

[1] We afterwards ascertained that *hile* was the name for the ceremonial uncleanliness of women.

[2] The *gamarale* of a Sinhalese village is the headman, who is responsible for the cultivation of the village lands and generally directs the agricultural affairs of the community.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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and "tame" Veddas, and to come to more recent times, there is evidence that a hundred years ago there were organized communities of house-building Veddas, while certain Veddas received grants of land from the Sinhalese kings, and on these lived as definite village communities until quite recently, probably till within the last half century.

Village Veddas of Uva Bintenne.

Dambani. The present community of Dambani, in the jungle between Kallodi and Alutnuwara, may serve as an example of a village Vedda community. Some twenty families living in tolerably built houses keep buffaloes and cultivate chena, the latter being big enough not only to supply their own wants, but to permit of a lively trade with Sinhalese traders. These Dambani folk have been known to the Arachi of Belligala as a flourishing community in the same social condition for the last thirty years, and he states that they were in this condition in his father's time. A short visit was sufficient to show that here was a community which, though it had lost many Vedda beliefs, still retained others, and was so strong and independent that there was little likelihood of its immediate fusion with the surrounding population. Physically these people (Plate XV, figure 2), though somewhat darker and often of a stouter build than the Danigala Veddas, could not be mistaken for Sinhalese. The Dambani people are unfortunately "show" Veddas, that is to say, people who have been sent for so often by white visitors that they have learnt certain tricks, which they show off directly they see a European, and so constantly demand presents that serious work with them is an impossibility.

A positive advantage which has, however, arisen from this condition, is that these folk have kept up the remains of the so-called Vedda language. The headman in whose district these Veddas are situated is largely responsible for this, for he always speaks to them in their own dialect in harsh tones. He is an extremely kind old man, and answers definite questions perfectly truthfully, yet like so many Sinhalese, he generally says only what he thinks is expected of him, hence, the belief in the fierce sullen ways of the Veddas and their inability to laugh has been

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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them was their unhuman apathy and utter lack of interest.... Although we came upon them unexpectedly, and although, as they told us later, they had never before seen white people, nevertheless, neither of them showed the slightest astonishment or interest in our appearance; both glanced up for a second, and then cast down their eyes, and continued silently shelling the seeds of the lotus pods beside them, and stirring the simmering pot over the fire. Near the other huts, women and children were occupied at the same task; some were sitting on the ground around a pile of lotus pods, others were attending to the cooking. At first the children seemed a little frightened at us, but contrary to expectation, did not rush off to the jungle....

"At the time of our visit there were but three men and seventeen women and children in Makulugulla; these were distributed in five shelters or huts. The chief's house was made of four upright posts and a flat thatched roof of palm leaves, but without walls or flooring. The other huts were shaped like A-tents, one was thatched with coarse grass, the other covered with large circular leaves of the lotus. The remaining two huts were shaped like wall tents, the roofs of grass or palm-leaf thatch, and the walls of bark. They all had dirt floors, and not one of them was over eight feet square. In three of the huts the utensils, such as earthen pots, baskets, gourds and mats, were piled on the ground at one end; in only two were there any shelves. The floor of each, however, was neatly swept, and even outside the huts, where all but the aged and the very young slept, the ground had been swept clear of leaves and twigs.

"The cooking was all done out of doors, at a fire-place consisting of three stones; and the cook was honoured by having a seat, either a block of wood or the dried skin of the Axis deer or the Muntjac. We were also surprised to see their providence, in that they had quite a good-sized bundle of dry firewood on store in the huts. We expected to find the village reeking with refuse and decaying game, of which we heard that they were fond, but the place was free from smells, and really clean. The jungle at this spot was composed of large trees and

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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come, but strangely this and the nearly related Sitala Wanniya Veddas were the only communities to the east of the Badulla-Batticaloa road in which exogamy prevailed. The Henebedda and Kovil Vanamai Veddas all married freely within the clan. It is, however, probable that this is a recent though not quite modern innovation, since at Henebedda it was said that it was particularly fitting that Morane and Unapane should intermarry.

Nevill recognised the existence of exogamy, and presumably it was of the Bintenne Veddas that he made the following very definite statement, which applies equally well to the condition of things existing at the present day, even among such sophisticated folk as those of Omuni, where genealogies were taken in order to make quite certain of this matter. "The rule for marriage was stringent. The daughter represents her mother's family, the son also represents his mother's family. In no case did a person marry one of the same family, even though the relationship was lost in remote antiquity. Such a marriage is incest. The penalty for incest is death. Thus the daughter must marry either her father's sister's son, or her mother's brother's son, neither of whom would be of the same clan name. Failing these she may marry any of their name, and should no such bridegroom be available, marriage into a third family becomes necessary[1]."

If the distribution of these Vedda communities in which exogamy prevails be studied on the map it will be seen that with the exception of the Sitala Wanniya and Godatalawa (Galmede) groups all the Veddas to the west of the Badulla-Batticaloa road are exogamous, whereas those to the east of the road contract marriage within the clan.

As a matter of convenience we now give a list complementary to that on pp. 71 to 74 showing what *waruge* were represented in each of the communities we visited. Danigala: Morane, Unapane, Namadewa (the last not acknowledged). Henebedda: Morane, Unapane, Namadewa (the latter properly forming the Kolombedda community and settlement). Kovil Vanamai (Bandaraduwa): Morane, Unapane, Uru (the latter forming the settlement at Uniche). In all these settlements marriage occurs within the clan.

[1] *Taprobanian*, Vol. I, 1886, p. 178.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

with the Sinhalese, although, unless for the purpose of barter, they avoid intercourse with strangers. Their wants, however, are so few, that they rarely emerge from their forests[1].

"I need not say that they are very simple and primitive in their habits. The 'wilder sort' have had too little communication with Sinhalese to have acquired the vices of civilization. The few necessities of life which the forest does not supply, such as steel and iron for their arrowheads and axes, and the very scanty clothing which they wear, they obtain by barter, their wax, and honey, elk flesh and ivory, being eagerly sought after by the neighbouring Sinhalese, or 'the ubiquitous Moors'[2]."

There are no puberty ceremonies for either sex, except among certain Veddas who have been much influenced by Tamils or Sinhalese, among whom the girls are isolated for a short time at puberty. Thus although the following ceremony is observed at puberty by the Uniche Veddas, there is no doubt that it has been borrowed from the local Sinhalese who have a similar ceremony, though according to our information the latter people do not break the pot. When a girl becomes unwell for the first time one of her *nanas* places a pot of water on her head and goes with her to some place where there is a *naga* tree. Here the *nanas* takes the pot from the girl's head and dashes it on the ground so that the pot breaks. The girl is then secluded in a specially built shelter in which she stays until the end of the period, when she washes and returns to her parents' house. During her seclusion she is attended by a girl, always one of her *nanas*, who brings her food in a vessel set apart for this purpose but which is not cooked at a special fire. Among the wilder Veddas no special measures are taken when a woman menstruates, she is allowed to eat the ordinary food, and to sleep in the cave as usual. But among all the village Veddas, and most of those who have mixed at all with the Sinhalese, the menstruous women are strictly isolated, a little shelter being built for them a few paces from the family hut (Plate XX). At Bendiyagalge, where the Henebedda and Kolombedda people were staying at the time of our visit, menstruous women stayed apart at one corner of the cave, they were fed from the pot in

[1] Bailey, *op. cit.* p. 285—286.

[2] Bailey, *op. cit.* p. 291.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

302 431 585 593 sister said, "Don't be sorry, I will give you a lock of my hair." She cut a lock from her own head, which he kept until his marriage when he gave it to his wife while she was still at her father's cave. Then he took her to his own cave where she made him a waist string on the second or third day after marriage. To his sister who was then unmarried he gave an axe out of gratitude. Nila cut a lock from his head to give his wife, as his sister was away at the time he was married, otherwise she would have given him one. Pema did not give his wife any hair as her mother had given her some.

302 431 585 ●184 Among the village Veddas at Unuwatura Bubula the custom of giving hair as a wedding gift was not known, yet the shaman's wife had a lock which her mother had given her. She assured us that only married women might wear it.

586 Anything like a formal divorce is unknown, but we heard of one instance occurring three generations ago, in which a woman who had gone to live with her husband left him and returned to her parents. The daughter of a Bingoda man, whose nickname Kupunkarea is still remembered, was given to a boy nicknamed Kankuna "Sore Eyes." As he was lazy and took no trouble to support his wife, so that she was frequently obliged to go to her parents for food, they kept her with them. Kankuna was very angry, but he did not threaten violence or attempt to bring back his wife by force. Later she was given to a Vedda of Bandaraduwa and after his death she went to live with a Sinhalese. It was said that she was an unusually pretty girl.

595 It is quite certain that polyandry never existed among uncontaminated Veddas, but at Henebedda we met with one case that must, we think, be called by this name. Before relating this we may, however, call attention to the fact that polyandry is a tolerably common practice among the Sinhalese peasants of the Vedirata, as it is among the less educated classes in other parts of the island[1].

[1] Cf. *Papers on the Custom of Polyandry as practised in Ceylon*, Government Record Office, Colombo, in which Mr R. W. Ievers, speaking of the Kegalla district, says:—"Having been for six years in charge of a Kandyan district (Kegalla), and having to deal with land cases involving rights of inheritance, and having, as Registrar of Kandyan Marriages, to hear divorce cases, I have found that the custom of polyandry was almost universal; and that in the case of a marriage registered under

1:Seligmann & Seligmann: E-S (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

844 side supported by an angle of the rock, and a woman behind her supports her and presses down upon her shoulders. The woman remains in the cave for three or four days after the birth. At Sitala Wanniya there are no food taboos, but at
843 Henebedda a pregnant woman avoids *madu*, which fruits are
262 said to produce diarrhœa and vomiting, and two kinds of yams which also purge and are believed to induce still-birth. A nursing mother must eat neither the fat of the monitor lizard
853 nor *rilawa* flesh, as these are said to produce purging and would
262 kill the infant. She may, however, eat the meat of the grey ape *wandura*. The fat of the spotted deer also spoils the milk, and if the mother eats *mora* fruit the child will get worms. The
844 Henebedda Veddas, who are partially cave and hut dwellers, say that if a birth occurs in the cave a screen is made round
[184] the parturient woman. Among all the settled Veddas, as among the rural Sinhalese, a special hut is built in which birth occurs. The afterbirth is commonly buried in the hut among village Veddas, and no Veddas seem to attach any special importance to its disposal.

[843 262] At Uniche a pregnant woman would not eat venison or hare's flesh. The pains and danger of childbirth are so well recognised by the Veddas that a special ceremony is performed by the wilder Veddas, and a prayer offered for the safety of the young mother (cf. p. 251). We were assured at Sitala Wanniya that if this ceremony were omitted the mother and child would die. At Henebedda it was said that if a woman appeared to be dangerously ill in childbed, a Sinhalese *katandirala* (devil dancer)
[165] would be called in. Death during childbirth seemed rare, but a few cases were recorded. Except among those Veddas who
834 have come most under Sinhalese influence connection is not avoided during pregnancy, or for any considerable period after childbirth, nor is chastity enforced before hunting or dancing.

[553] Children are usually named within a month of their birth, the name being decided upon by their parents. At Godatalawa
551 it was said that a child's name would be freely mentioned, but at Sitala Wanniya and Henebedda we were told that, although every child was given a name soon after birth, they were never called or spoken of by their names until they were at least four

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

Gange Bandar, unknown among the wilder Veddas but worshipped by all village Veddas, was known at Unuwatura Bubula.

OMUNI.

The history of this settlement dating back to the first half of the last century has been given on pp. 45 and 46. The Omuni folk believe there are spirits (*yaku*) everywhere in the jungle, but none have seen them; further, there are many *yaku* of each kind or species such as the Indigollae Yaku, the Dadayan Yaku and many others including the Gale Yaku called the Jungle Yaku, who do not, however, frequent the jungle around Omuni. It was said that Ganga Bandar Deyo who lives in rocks in the river is greater than any of these. Omuni was one of the first Vedda settlements we visited, and as the importance of Sinhalese and Tamil gods and demons was not then appreciated no questions concerning these were asked. It is, however, reasonable to suppose that the Kataragam God and other mighty *deviyo* are worshipped. The spirits of the dead (*Nae Yaku*) are believed to be associated with rocks; on the whole they are kindly spirits, but it is necessary to invoke and propitiate them.

A *Nae Yaku* ceremony is held some little time after a death has taken place, at which the shaman dances with an *aude* before a *maesa* on which is placed an offering of cooked yams and other food, and the *maesa* is decorated with special clothes kept for that purpose. The *aude* is held in the smoke arising from gum-resin thrown on glowing charcoal, and then pressed on the head of all the male members of the community. If this were not done little game would be killed.

We have an account of another ceremony performed to cure sickness and when the chena had been reaped, but it is not clear what spirits were invoked at this; presumably the most important of these were certain of the *yaku* other than the *Nae Yaku*, though the *Nae Yaku* may have played a subordinate part. A shed or very rough house is built and hung with special clothes reserved for this purpose, those shown to us being rather old and worn pieces of linen woven at Batticaloa. A roughly made shelf forming a sort of altar is built in the shed on which

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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The words used in speaking of the bear are of
825 interest from this standpoint. We believe that in most Vedda
communities *walaha* the ordinary word for bear is seldom or
789 never used[1], certainly this was the case at Sitala Wanniya where the word ordinarily used for bear was *kuria*. This word was not considered a dangerous word to use when all bears were at a distance, but when there was any possibility of coming in contact with a bear the animal was spoken of as *hatara*, the meaning of this word being "enemy" or "adversary." On one occasion when with Handuna of Sitala Wanniya we came to a hill covered with irregularly weathered rocks and known to be the haunt of bears, Handuna shouted *hatara yanda* ("enemy begone") before taking an abrupt turn in the track which here skirted a mass of rock. He repeated this sentence two or three times in a loud voice and assured us that we could now proceed without running the least risk of meeting a bear, and he himself led us round the rock with every appearance of careless ease, explaining that even if bears were about they would have heard what he had said and would have moved away. Two of the Henebedda Veddas exhibited the same appearance of carelessness when guiding us to a rock-shelter which though sometimes used by Veddas had not been tenanted for some time and bore obvious signs of being the lair of a bear. Sita Wanniya, our guide, explained his attitude by his belief in the power of the charms with which he was confident he could put any bear to flight.

These charms were recited in a loud voice, in fact the last words were almost shrieked and would doubtless have turned any bear, for it is a well known fact that the Sinhalese bear fears man and only attacks when surprised or cornered. This is shown by the circumstances in which the majority of accidents with bears occur. A man coming silently along a narrow jungle track suddenly meets a bear, or disturbs one grubbing behind a white ant heap. It is then that the bear, as much frightened as the man, charges inflicting severe though seldom fatal injuries.

[194]

[1] We met with one obvious exception to this rule, the Henebedda youths Sita Wanniya and Poromala used the word *walaha* quite freely even in the jungle, and old Poromala, half of whose face was torn away by a bear some years ago, has been nicknamed Walaha, the Bear. This name was, however, given him by the Sinhalese.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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among the wilder Veddas at the present day. It therefore appears that although beads are worn as ornaments by the members of certain communities in the Bintenne there is no evidence for their use as such among the Veddas to the east of the Badulla-Batticaloa road.

We may next consider certain facts which seem to indicate that beads may be sometimes treated as amulets, or at least as having magical power. At Bandaraduwa where there has been a great deal of Sinhalese influence, one woman wore a piece of knotted string round her throat which had been charmed and put on by a Sinhalese to cure her of some ailment. When we gave her a string of beads she was very pleased and immediately broke the old charmed string and put the beads round her neck in place of it.

At Bendiyagalge all the women were particularly anxious for us to give beads to their children and immediately put these round their necks, but those given to themselves were not usually put on in our presence. In both these cases there is only the suggestion that beads were regarded as anything more than ornaments, and this also holds good as regards the beads of bear's bone worn by Kaira of Bingoda already recorded, but in the following cases the relation of beads to the *yaku* is perfectly clear. The women of Unuwatura Bubula, though they possessed beads of the same kind as those worn by the women of Omuni, were afraid to wear them, and gave them to the shaman to keep and use in *yaku* ceremonies. In this village we found that women would not accept red beads as presents because "they were afraid," though they readily took the white beads offered them, and the shaman when dancing to the Alut Yakini wore cross shoulder straps of old beads, and similar beads were kept for Indigollae Yaka.

There is equally strong evidence of the definite association of beads with the *yaku* in other communities, though the reason for this association could not be determined. At Sitala Waniya a band of bast was placed upon the offering to the Rahu Yaku, and our informants said that they would have used beads instead of the bast had they possessed them. At the same place when preparing for the dance to Dola Yaka, who gives

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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at Aralu Talawa about two miles east of Peria Pillumalai in the Eastern Province on the Badulla-Batticaloa road. Now these Veddas possessed elephants and cattle, so that when two Moormen pedlars came and saw the Veddas living well and in comfort, they thought how good it would be to kill them and take their goods. The Moormen asked the Veddas to barter honey with them, and Moormen and Veddas went to the hill now called Yakagala, for there were *bambara* colonies among its rocks. The Veddas went down ladders of creepers to the combs, but before they could take the honey the ladders were cut by the Moormen and the Veddas were dashed to pieces. The Moormen came back to the settlement and when the Veddas' wives questioned them as to the whereabouts of their husbands the Moormen said they were bathing in a stream close by. The women did not believe this and, suspecting foul play, went to look for their husbands and found the bodies at the foot of the precipice. They went back to their houses, let loose the cattle and fired their houses, for they determined to kill themselves. The elder sister saw the Moormen running towards them, so standing on the edge of a precipice she called her young sister to her saying that her bangle was broken. As her younger sister stood near her she suddenly grasped her round the body and jumped over the cliff. The *yaku* of these women and of their husbands still remain in the neighbourhood of their old dwelling-place which because of them looks clean, as if folk still lived there. The rock bee still lives on this hill to which the Veddas resort to take honey.

POTTERY.

The Veddas make very rough pots. A lump of dark coloured clay is taken, patted into the desired shape, left to dry in the air, and then baked. The Henebedda Veddas who made the pots shown in Plate LXII said that these pots were placed on the fire and covered with pieces of dried wood so as to be submitted to heat on every side. The less sophisticated Veddas of Sitala Wanniya stated that they simply placed the air dried pots on the fire, when they were soon baked hard.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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151 Our observations on Sinhalese, were very limited, but led us to consider that the acuity of hearing of the peasant Sinhalese between the ages of 30 and 40 did not excel that of Europeans, for although a few individuals had a higher acuity than ourselves, the majority fell below us.

ENUMERATION.

802 This is a convenient place to refer to the question of counting. With regard to village Veddas our observations confirm the ● 184 experience of others that the village Veddas have adopted the Sinhalese numerals, which they use correctly, at least up to 20, but we cannot say whether they are equally accurate when using higher numbers. This facility in counting is not found among the wilder Veddas whose method among themselves on the rare occasions on which they wish to express a definite number is to take small pieces of stick and lay them on one side saying as each stick is put down *ekamai* "that is one." Beyond this the wilder Veddas have a slight knowledge of the meaning of the Sinhalese words for the lower numbers. Handuna of Sitala Wanniya made no difficulty in picking out 2, 3, or 4 pieces of stick from a heap on being given the Sinhalese number; the Sinhalese words for 5 or 6 (though he said he knew them perfectly well) led to hesitation and sometimes to failure in picking out the correct number, while larger numbers obviously failed to convey any precise idea to him. Although we interrogated only two other elderly Veddas of the wilder groups on this matter the results we obtained from them were so like those given by Handuna that we do not hesitate to accept his behaviour as typical of the old members of the less sophisticated groups of Veddas, and in support of this view we may refer to p. 33 on which we have stated the information given on this point by a very old Sinhalese informant. We do not attribute the Vedda inability to count to any lack of intelligence but simply to their having little need to be precise in the matter of numbers[1].

[1] For further information concerning this point cf. *Ancient Ceylon*, pp. 86 and 87.

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

calca and Badulla. The largest Veddah population is in the former district, and these are they of whom Tennent principally writes, but they are by no means the wildest specimens of the race. They have not maintained so complete an isolation from other races as those I am about to describe, and consequently are not worthy of the same attention.*

It is the "Wilder Sort" of Veddahs, as Knox calls them, of whom I desire to place on record an accurate description, before they quite pass away and are forgotten.

They roam about through the park-like district of Nilgala, which presents, of its kind, perhaps the loveliest scenery in this beautiful island, and wander among the forests of Bintenne—that "Land of Bintan all covered with mighty woods and filled with abundance of deer", where Knox tells us these dreaded "Wild Men" dwelt.

It would be difficult to conceive more barbarous types of the human race than they present. Yet there are degrees even in *their* barbarism, for those of Nilgala are wilder than their brethren of Bintenne. They are fewer in number, and more diminutive in stature. They are distributed through their lovely country in small septs, or families, occupying generally caves in the rocks, though some have little bark huts. They depend almost solely on hunting for their support,† and hold little communication even with each other.

Few in number as they are,—they did not exceed seventy-two persons in 1858,—still no other human beings are to be found for many miles round their habitations, and this seclusion has caused them to retain peculiarities which are fast disappearing, or have already disappeared from among even the wildest of Bintenne.‡

There, there are both wild and settled Veddahs. Of the latter

* See Tennent's remarks on the late Mr. Atherton's praiseworthy and successful labours in civilizing the Veddahs of the Batticaloa district, where there are now only some two hundred and fifty who, having resisted all his efforts to improve them, still live in caves near the rock called Gunner's Quoin, and in Palla Palata of the Batticaloa Bintenna. I have been in communication with Mr. Birch, the present agent for government in that district, and, from specimens of their *patois* which he sent me, and which greatly resembles the Singhalese usually spoken, in those very words in which, in the Badulla district, the Veddah dialect differs from it, I am justified in describing them as having had, in some period of their history, more intercourse with the Singhalese than those of whom I am writing.

† Solely till 1855, when I succeeded in inducing them to turn their attention to cultivation; but they much prefer their own wild life, and their cultivation is very limited.

‡ In using the term Bintenne, I refer to that portion of the division of Bintenne which belongs to the Badulla district. A larger portion of the same division is in Batticaloa.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

I shall say nothing, for they have long associated, although they have not yet intermarried, with the neighbouring Singhalese. The former resemble those of Nilgala. If they are less wild, it is but a shade less wild, almost too slight to be called more civilized. They, in like manner, are distributed in small tribes or families. They live in huts formed of boughs and bark, not so much from any advance in civilization, as from the dearth of rock caves, which abound in Nilgala; but they, too, become Troglodytes in wet weather. They cultivate small patches of chena,* but their chief source of livelihood is the produce of the chase, and honey; and they move about from forest to forest, guided by the blossoming of the flowers, in search of bees and game. Their number in 1856 was 364, but some of these even were much more wild than others.

Both Nilgala and Bintenne Veddahs regard, for each tribe, particular tracts of country as their own, and are, as Knox tells us, careful not to trespass over each other's bounds, and they observe the custom, still prevalent among Kandyans, which entitles the lord of the soil to a portion of the game killed upon it.†

In my description of the wild Veddahs of Nilgala, and those of Bintenne, it is well to bear in mind that, though they are not fifty miles apart, there is no communication whatever between them. No individual Veddah of the one district ever saw one of the other. They are entirely distinct; but distinct only in geographical position. They have inherited the same customs, superstitions, names, and dialect.‡

In appearance, the Veddahs differ materially from the Singhalese. They are smaller in every respect, and rather darker, or, more properly, more dusky in complexion. They are short, slightly built, yet very active. Though far from being muscular, their limbs are firmly knit together, and they are athletic and capable of enduring great fatigue. Though spare, they are generally in very fair condition, and look more healthy than many of the Singhalese in the adjoining districts.§

The tallest Veddah I ever saw, a man so towering above his

* A "chéna" is a patch of ground cleared from the forest for cultivation. The jungle is burnt down, a crop taken off, and then suffered to grow up again. It is recleared again after intervals of from five to ten years.

† This custom is called gang-gâté, lit. village hind leg; "gama" would be better translated "township", as it signifies a tract of ground within certain limits. The lord of the soil claims the "hind leg" of any deer, etc., killed within his bounds.

‡ The Veddahs of the Badulla Bintenne appear a distinct sept; those of Nilgala are connected with a Veddah family living just across the Batticaloa boundary, close to which their country lies.

§ I use the term "Singhalese" and "Kandyan" in distinction from "Veddah."

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

171 But what is Hindú is, so to speak, the *dead* part of their religious belief. What is in daily practice, bears the closest resemblance to the Nât worship of the aboriginal tribes of India.*

I have, in the preceding pages, faithfully recorded the habits, customs, and superstitions of the "wilder sort" of the Veddahs. 194 To have discussed the "tamer sort," or those who, for a considerable period, have maintained intercourse with the Singhalese or people of the country, would have been a mere waste of time; or to have considered them in connection with their more barbarous brethren would have been to have fallen into the very error, which has marred the exceedingly interesting notice of the aboriginal race of Ceylon, which Tennent has given us. It would have been like weaving a woof of bleached and unbleached threads, so intermingled and complicated that a clear perception of either were impossible. I have confined myself, therefore, exclusively to the most barbarous specimens of the race, for wild as the wildest of the Batticalao district are, they are less barbarous than these.

I now propose to consider the evidence I have collected, with a 174 view to fixing the ethnical origin of these Veddahs. I have shewn that the term "Veddah" has no distinctive signification—that it may be, and is applied to barbarous races generally, who depend on hunting for their support, and hence, to the wild tribes in India, who are supposed to be the aborigines of the country.

It has always been assumed, that the Veddahs of Ceylon are the descendants of the race which originally peopled the island, or, at any rate, of that which inhabited it prior to its conquest and colonization by Wijaya and his followers.† Of this, there can be

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naturally clean, on the banks of rivers, and in solitary spots." Sir William Jones's works.

* A paper "On the Veddahs of Bintenne", by the Rev. J. Gillings, was published in the Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society for 1853. Mr. Gilling's paper treats of the Veddahs inhabiting that portion of Bintenne which is in the district of Batticaloa, and it shews how materially they differ from the Veddahs of Nigala and the Badulla Bintenne, whom I have just described. He states that they have intermarried with the Singhalese, with whom they are "mixed up to a large extent"—that "adultery and polygamy are still common among them"—that "theft and lying are prevalent"; and he speaks of divorce as habitual. The absence of these practices among the Veddahs of the Badulla district is clearly to be accounted for by the greater isolation in which they have lived.

† Nothing can be more charming than that portion of Tennent's work in which he undertakes the proof that they are the descendants of the Yakkhos, as the Buddhistical writers termed the aborigines. And we may well forgive him for giving way to the temptation of reviving exploded customs, and discussing them in the present tense, in order to prove that the habits of the Veddahs, in the year of grace 1860, are identical with those of the Beesdm, in A.D. 400; for there can be no doubt that, about a century ago

3: Naish G-5 (1925) 1930 AX5 Vedda AX5

A Vedda Propitiation Ceremony.

The Veddas are the remnants of what may for convenience be referred to as the aboriginal inhabitants of Ceylon. They are found exclusively in that part of the island,—the greater part of it wild jungle country,—which is bounded on the north by the Verugal Aar, on the east by the sea, on the south by the Gal Oya, and on the west by the central mountain *massif* and the middle reaches of the Mahaweliganga. They vary greatly from group to group in the degree to which they have intermarried with their Sinhalese or Tamil neighbours, and have adopted those neigh-

101 131 177 184

3:Naish G-5 (1925) 1930 AX5 Vedda AX5

bours' language, customs, and manner of life. In a few of the remoter forest fastnesses of the interior there are still to be found more or less pure-blooded Veddas who continue to support life by the precarious *chena* cultivation and by hunting: but in addition to these pure-blooded Veddas, who are a very feeble folk indeed in point of numbers, the inhabitants of many of what are generally recognized as Sinhalese villages, and the so-called "coast Veddas," who have their settlements in a few places along the eastern coast to the north of Batticaloa, are to a greater or less extent of Vedda origin. The Veddas as a race have been visited and described by C. G. and B. Z. Seligmann [1] and more recently by Dr. R. L. Spittel [2] of Colombo. Of the coast Veddas the Seligmanns say,—"although these coast Veddas, or Verdas as they call themselves, have intermarried with the Tamils and have adopted many Tamil customs, they still have remains of the old clan system of the Veddas, and although they usually speak Tamil, the majority of them say they have a language of their own which they consider to be the old Vedda language, and which was found to be Sinhalese. They have roughly-built temples, and we were told independently in two settlements that the chief agency worshipped was called Kapalpe or Kabalpe, *i.e.*, "ship spirit." At first we feared some misunderstanding, but when one of us was shown within one of their temples, into which after some trouble he was allowed to penetrate, a small model of a ship partly square rigged was seen, and it was stated that at a special ceremony this was hoisted to the top of a pole some thirty feet tall which stood outside the temple." [3] The ceremony to be described in what follows appears to be in fact that conducted for the propitiation of this "ship spirit" and of the goddess Ammal, and, if so, it is that which the Seligmanns saw rehearsed, in part at any rate, at Vakarai.[4] The description, therefore, imperfect and perhaps inaccurate in some details as it may be, being

[1] C. G. and B. Z. Seligmann, *The Veddas*. See also *Spolia Zeylanica*, vol. v, Part xx, Dec. 1908, pp. 155 *et seq.*

[2] R. L. Spittel, *Wild Ceylon*.

[3] C. G. and B. Z. Seligmann, *Spolia Zeylanica*, vol. v, Part xx, Dec. 1908, pp. 156, 157.

[4] *The Veddas*, pp. 335-9.

5: Spittal D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

these Veddas. Bingoda is not all Vedda; essentially it is a Sinhalese chena village of about six or eight families, within a stone's throw of which are the crude huts belonging to the few surviving Veddas. Through a tangle of overgrown scrub we reach them; they are not so numerous that we cannot easily name every single Vedda there.

Three we have met before, Suthubanda, Gama and Badapissa; it was they who led us such a chase at Galmede. In the first hut we find the swarthy Gama and his comely young wife Kalu—his fifth experiment in matrimony: and he barely twenty-five! Not far from this is Suthubanda's abode, in which are his wife, the skinny Thuthi, mother by previous marriage of Gamma; their two little boys, Handuna and Naida and girls Kumi and Punji. Handuna is the quaintest brat imaginable; he is ash-coloured from top to toe, through crouching by the hearth all night to keep warm his naked body; for, all he has for cover is a little strip of loin cloth drooping erratically from a slack waist-string that sags well below his nates; his rotund abdomen accommodates an enormous spleen; with hands crossed over shrugged shoulders to keep the chill awa[illegible] he gazes quizzically at you.

Away from these two homes, across the stream, is the only other Vedda hut. Unlike those of Suthubanda and Gama which are of wattle and bast, this is a sadly dilapidated mud structure once occupied by a Moor. It is the most pathetic and curious menage here, and belongs to Kaira brother of Suthubanda. His wife Randunna, a hideous squint-eyed thing, is mother by a previous husband to Heenthuthi the twelve-year old wife of Badapissa (Muthua), Kaira's younger brother! A more ridiculous pair it would be hard to find: the wife a mere child, the husband barely more. The Veddas favour such early marriages, saying that, growing up thus together, the two learn to love each other well. Be that as it may, it does seem a most piteous travesty of human matings. Huddled by the hearth and shivering with ague, is old Thanthi mother of the clan, and wife of the dead chief Neela. And, lastly, we have here the most pathetic figure in all Bingoda—Kummi, a girl of fifteen, dust-besmeared, ulcerated, crippled, and so scantily clad that she is ashamed to stand lest she reveal her nakedness. A misery to herself and others, she sits apart with face shyly lowered, taking timid glances every now and then, like some wild thing, from large black lustrous eyes that might have shone befittingly on the face of some proud beauty.

To these, though they now dwelt apart at Mullegama, we must add Kaurala and his family, for he too was of Bingoda, and is maternal uncle of Suthubanda. By his two wives, Balli and Ranni, he has four little sons, Kaira Vanniya, Heratha, Kalua and Sela; and two daughters, Ranni and Dingi.

These details, though perhaps tedious, serve to bring out vividly the intimate inter-relationships of the Veddas, their apparent disregard of appearance or age in their choice of wives, the promiscuity of life in their one-roomed homes—mother, child and father all lying huddled together in a little space. For all that it must not be assumed that Veddas are devoid of a moral code. A man may have more than one wife, it is true; and, if it pleases him, he may cast her aside like a worn garment; but to each man his own woman while she is his; that is the Vedda law which all respect.

5: Spinel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

2. VEDDA CHARACTERISTICS, RELIGION, AND SUPERSTITION

If 'tis not a true philosophy
That the spirit when set free,
Still lingers about its olden home,
In the flower and the tree,
It is very strange that our pulses thrill
At the sight of a voiceless thing,
And our hearts yearn so with tenderness
In the beautiful time of Spring.

N. P. WILLIS

241 181 THE genuine Vedda is a quite incompetent agriculturist; that is a mark by which you may know him; and none are more so than the Veddas of Bingoda who can no more develop a *chena* than they can fly. They will make a fine beginning; valiantly fell trees and sow grain; but there it ends; whenever the mood seizes them they leave it all and go into the forest, and the wild animals wander in. This is why I consider the Veddas [184] of Bingoda the most primitive I have met; better even than the classical Veddas of Henebedde and Danigala who are more of the agriculturist and less of the hunter.

221 222 177 Though these Veddas live close to Sinhalese settlements, they spend a large part of their time in the jungle. When the forests have much to give—as in January and February, the good yam months, and June and July, the honey and fruits months—the Veddas take their families and forsake their huts for caves and stream-beds; here to-day, there to-morrow. But in times of jungle impoverishment—March to May, and September to December—they remain near the village, where at a pinch they can beg a pittance of grain; but even then foraging parties frequently wander forth and return in a few days with honey, flesh and swiftlets' nests for barter.

144 142 [826] There is, almost certainly, no Vedda to-day without some trace of Sinhalese (or Tamil) blood in his veins; a reason why anthropometry is so often arid of results; still, one can usually tell a Vedda from a Sinhalese at a glance: The sparsity of hair on the Vedda's face is his outstanding characteristic, in marked contrast to the heavily bearded Sinhalese; add to this a darker complexion, a shorter stature, a greater reserve, simplicity, and apathy, and an easily aroused ferocity of nature—and there is no more to be said. But Kaurala of Kotlinde would have it there was a further distinction: "See," said he, placing my hand on his Adam's apple. "I am a true Vedda; where is my throat-knot?"

181 Veddas are an independent folk. They are no respectors of persons; and if you wish to know them, it does not do to stand on your dignity. Displease them, and they will not come near you; treat them kindly and they are your good friends. Childish and ingenuous to a degree, they will address you on equal terms, and often show an embarrassing

3. SOME VEDDA ARTS AND A DANCE

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EDIBLE LIME

276 [237] The Vedda method of making from snail-shells an edible lime, the concomitant of a betel or bark chew, is interesting. Four varieties of snail afford it :—The large, white, land snails (*wantako* or *godang bello*) ; the small, black, river snails (*alang bello* or *gadu bello*), found in dry stream beds ; the bivalved *ethal bello* ; and the convoluted *hankuro* or *lanu bello*.

The *wantako* give the best lime. Six to twelve of their shells are dropped into a small fire, and a layer of dry twigs is laid over them. The flame is now vigorously fanned with a leafy sprig, to prevent the shells getting charred. When the overlying layer of twigs is reduced to embers, and the shells glow white, they are gently picked off with a stick, taken on the palm and placed in a large leaf (*kenda* or *halmilla*). A little water is then added or, in its absence, saliva ! The leaf is quickly folded over the shells which now disintegrate and " ripen." They are then smashed up with the fingers, and the chunam is distributed.

When the small *gadu bello* are used, the process is slightly different : the burnt shells, moistened and bundled in a leaf as before, are replaced on the embers quietened down with a sprinkling of water. The chunam from these is coarser and more gritty than that from the *wantako*.

FIRE MAKING

372 Fire is obtained by jungle folk in a variety of ways. When gun-powder is to hand there is a choice of two methods : (*a*) A little powder is placed on a stone and closely surrounded with small fragments of cloth or tree cotton. It is then ignited, and the rag set on fire, by striking it sharply with an axe-head previously warmed by rubbing on a rock. (*b*) When, in addition to powder, a cap is available, the powder is put into a small square of rag with the upturned cap in its centre. Into the cap the point of a knife is inserted, and the rag is closed over and clapsed firmly against the blade. The striking of this on a stone explodes the cap, ignites the powder, and lights the rag.

These methods being too wasteful for routine use, the commonest mode of fire-making in the jungles is by means of a C-shape iron strike-a-light (*gini-kätuwa*) and a piece of chert or crystalline quartz (*irimana gal*), against which is a piece of *kitul* cotton or rag to take the spark when the two are struck together.

The most primitive, and essentially Vedda, art of making fire is by the attrition of two sticks. Although I had hitherto travelled much in Ceylon forests, always making inquiries about this mode of obtaining [184] fire, it was not until I came to Bingoda that I was able to see it done, and that with astonishing ease. In Henebedde and Bintenne the art was dead ; indeed some of the Veddas had never even heard of it !

The light *velang* stick of which arrows are made is the wood *par excellence* for fire making. Elephants being fond of the tree, the dry